

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

ACDA-05 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 /059 W

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O R 181655Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1369

INFO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

COMFAIRMED NAPLES IT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS GR

SUBJ: THE POLYTECHNION ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

REF: ATHENS 8919

1. THE NOVEMBER 17 MARCH IN ATHENS COMMEMORATING THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1973 POLYTECHNION EVENTS AND BLOODSHED WAS TRULY MONUMENTAL (REFTEL). (OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF HOW AND WHY SO MANY GREEKS TURNED OUT FOR THIS EVENT IS GIVEN IN A SEPTTEL.) THOUGH WE HAVE NOT SEEN ANY OFFICIAL FIGURES, WE CAN ROUGHLY ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF MARCHERS TO TOTAL PROBABLY UPWARDS OF 250,000. IN ADDITION, AN ESTIMATED 100,000 SPECTATORS PACKED THE MARCH ROUTE, MOST OF THEM SYMPATHIZERS OF THE MARCHERS. YOUTH PREDOMINATED AMONG THE LATTER BUT OLDER GREEKS WERE ALSO PRESENT IN LARGE NUMBERS AND ALL WERE DRAWN FROM ALL WALKS OF GREEK LIFE. THE PARADE PASSED BY THE EMBASSY IN A STEADY STREAM FOR APPROXIMATELY THREE AND A HALF HOURS.

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2. WHEN THE MARCH PASSED THE EMBASSY AND ALL ALONG THE

PARADE ROUTE BANNERS AND CHANTS OF ANTI-AMERICAN SLOGANS PREVAILED: "OUT WITH THE AMERICANS;" "OUT WITH THE BASES OF DEATH;" "DOWN WITH NATO"; "DOWN WITH THE CIA;" "NEITHER FRENCH NOR AMERICANS;" AND THE LIKE. IN ADDITION TO THESE THEMES, THE EXTREME LEFT "REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST MOVEMENT OF GREECE" (EKKE) SHOUTED FOR REVOLUTION ("RAISE THE WEAPONS HIGH," "SLAVES YOU GUARD YOUR BOSSES") AND JABBED AT BOTH NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT--"NEITHER NATO NOR WARSAW," "OUT WITH BOTH SUPER POWERS." SLOGANS AGAINST THE JUNTA--"DOWN WITH FASCISM"--WERE ALSO PROMINENT. THE CRY, "THE POLYTECHNION LIVES", WAS UNIVERSAL.

3. ON A BEAUTIFUL, BALMY MOONLIT NIGHT IN ATHENS, THE PARADERS WERE ORDERLY, ENTHUSIASTIC AND UNINTERESTED IN PROVOKING DISTURBANCES. MOREOVER, THEY WERE WELL-DISCIPLINED AND MONITORED BY THEIR OWN MARCH WARDENS. (THE POLICE WERE PRESENT IN FORCE AROUND THE EMBASSY.) SPECTATOR REACTION VARIED, WITH ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE IN SOME AREAS BUT LESS SO IN OTHERS AS THE MARCHING GROUPS PASSED BY. LIKEWISE EFFORTS BY ORGANIZED CLAQUES TO BOOST THEM TO GREATER ENTHUSIASMS WERE SUCCESSFUL IN SOME AREAS (SUCH AS CONSTITUTION SQUARE) AND UNAVAILING ELSEWHERE.

4. EACH POLITICAL GROUP AND MOVEMENT MARCHED INDEPENDENTLY AND UNDER ITS OWN BANNERS. WHEN COMMUNIST AND OTHER EXTREME REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION FLOWED BY, SPECTATORS WERE TREATED TO THE SIGHT OF LARGE NUMBERS OF RED FLAGS AND THE CRY UNHEARD IN THE STREETS OF ATHENS SINCE 1945 "EAM--ELAS"" LINKED TO "POLYTECHNION." THE GROUPING BY PARTY ALSO HAD AT LEAST ONE UNINTENDED EFFECT. THEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY (EXTERIOR) MARCHED BEFORE CLAQUES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (INTERIOR) OR THE EKKE THE MARCHERS WERE SUBJECT TO BOOING, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH DID LITTLE TO REINFORCE THE IMPRESSION OF UNITY MOST OF THE MARCH'S ORGANIZERS HOPED TO CONVEY.

4. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION JOINED IN SALUTING THE POLYTECHNION ANNIVERSARY. THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, IN DELIVERING A FLORAL WREATH AT THE SCHOOL, SALUTED THOSE "WHO STOOD IN THE FRONT LINE" IN THE "STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM." LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARLIAMENT MARKED THE EVENT WITH SPEECHES AND, ON THE PROPOSAL OF ITS PRESIDENT, A MOMENT OF SILENCE (AS DID RADIO AND TV). THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR, SPEAKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, EXPRESSED "GRATITUDE" AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMEMORATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE POLYTECHNION AND RENDERED TRIBUTE "TO THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR BLOOD AND EVEN THEIR LIVES FOR THE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM OF THE GREEK PEOPLE."

5. OPPOSITION CU/NF LEADER MAVROS, ALSO SPEAKING IN PARLIAMENT, ANNOUNCED HIS PARTY'S "VENERATION AND RESPECT FOR THE VICTIMS" WHO FELL FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU OF PASOK REPEATED THESE SAME SENTIMENTS, AND ADDED "NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, POPULAR SOVERIGNTY AND SOCIAL FREEDOM WERE THE DEMANDS OF THE FIGHTERS OF THE POLYTECHNION... THEY DID NOT ONLY TOPPLE A FOREIGN-INSPIRED DICTATORSHIP BUT ALSO TRACED THE PATH FOR THE FUTURE OF HELLENISM." MOREOVER, HE SAID, "TODAY'S DEMONSTRATION OF ALL THE PEOPLE ALSO MEANS A NEW ERA FOR GREECE."

6. EDA'S ILIAS ILIOU CITED THE POLYTECHNION'S RESISTANCE TO TYRANNY AND COMMENDED IT AS A LESSON TO PRESENT DAY GREEKS ON THE NEED FOR UNITY OF THE PEOPLE AS A BARRIER TO FUTURE ATTEMPTS AT DICTATORSHIP. COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR SECRETARY GENERAL FLORAKIS HIT THE EXPECTED THEMES ATTACKING "U.S. IMPERIALISM" AND CALLING FOR GREATER DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, ANTIAMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS, COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS08954
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750401-0747
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751134/aaaabdzs.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 ATHENS 8919
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2003 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE POLYTECHNION ANNIVERSARY EVENTS
TAGS: PINS, PDEV, GR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006